

Staff Report and Recommendations Notification Process

June 16, 2016

The Honorable Mayor Ellison and
Members of the City Commission:

At its May 23, 2016, meeting, the Royal Oak City Commission requested information from staff regarding current practices and recommendations for improving notifications, especially construction notifications.

Several city departments who send out a variety of regular notifications were canvassed for this report. It should be noted that planning division notifications are not provided in this report as notices from this division must comply city code or other laws.

The engineering division and the department of public services (DPS) responded with information regarding construction notices as follows:

Current practices and policies - notice to impacted properties:

Construction notifications issued by the engineering division are mailed as a courtesy and are not required by any city code or law. The informal policy is to notify properties in writing at least 30-days prior to work commencing. Unfortunately, in some instances important notification information is not available 30-days in advance. In such cases, the policy is to give no less than a ten(10)-day notice.

Construction notifications are sent to residents and property owners with construction immediately adjacent to their property and/or will be directly impacted. A 'direct impact' would be any activities that can affect the ability to access a street or driveway, or involve an excavation in areas that property owners are required to maintain, such as sidewalks or boulevard areas. Notices for important meetings where decisions will be made regarding the properties are also mailed with no less than a ten(10)-day notice. Often, it is difficult to provide a longer notice period.

The city relies on direct mailings as its primary source to relay pertinent information to residents. We cannot control the reliability or timing of the postal delivery system nor can we ensure that residents will open or read these notices in a timely manner.

The engineering division has attached a table of current notifications sent by direct mail to impacted property owners for 2016 construction projects (Attachment 1). To date, staff has mailed more than 10,000 detailed letters to property owners of projects that will directly impact their home or business.

In addition to engineering construction projects, DPS has provided information regarding the type of projects they perform in city parks. DPS limits notifications to properties that will be directly impacted by their work operations. Similarly, they do not notify nearby property owners or neighborhood groups when work is taking place in a city park unless their properties are directly impacted by the work.

Current practices and policies - Notice to general public:

Annually, the city prepares a map depicting all construction projects that are scheduled by the engineering division for the calendar year. In 2016, staff created a version of the map that is available on the city website showing color-coded locations that correspond to a legend for the work that is taking place in identified areas. This year, the map also incorporates known Consumer's Energy projects.

In the future, staff is looking to have an interactive map where users can click on the depicted areas and see a summary of the work scope and schedule, as well as view a copy of the construction notices that have been mailed. This interactive map release is planned as part of the city's GIS development and will hopefully be in place by next spring.

Additionally, a listing of all known city construction projects is sent to property owners as part of the spring issue of the Insight Magazine. The list typically states the type of work and locations. It is also published on the city website. The list corresponds to the construction project map.

The city also uses its social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and NextDoor and its weekly email blast, which goes to more than 5,000 people, to notify residents of pertinent information regarding construction as well as other city activities.

In recent weeks the city has installed "Pardon our Dust" signs at several off-street sites where city contractors are staging operations for nearby construction projects. The new signs have the city's URL – www.romi.gov – to direct residents to the city's website where construction information is now pinned to the top of the home page. This information is updated by the Royal Oak's community engagement specialist, Judy Davids, who has begun meeting with the engineering division weekly to discuss communication opportunities.

Staff comments regarding recent communication issues:

Sidewalk exemption review notices: The city commission has concerns regarding notification of city commission meetings where decisions regarding properties will be made.

Mailings are sent to affected properties no less than 10-days prior to the meetings. Recently, several property owners stated that they did not get notice or got late notice for the sidewalk exemption review. The mailings were sent to property owners as soon as information became available.

Fries Park: The city commission has concerns regarding notification of construction at Fries Park.

DPS staff worked with the engineering division to locate an area where contractors working on a Greenfield Road water main could stage operations, equipment materials and debris nearby. Greenfield Road is a county road with Royal Oak utilities beneath and very little space to stage operations. Fries Park was selected due to its low usage and proximity to the construction. In exchange for using the area as a staging area, the contractor agreed to – at no extra cost to the city – fill and regrade the park to make it more functional.

Since Fries Park is completely surrounded by city roads and no adjacent private property would be directly impacted by the work (loss of ability to access a street or driveway etc.), notifications were not given. This follows city notification practices in regard to work that directly impacts a property.

Several neighborhood residents called with concerns about the staging area and staff explained that the end result will be an improved, dryer and more useful park. The city has been working with Mr. Ted Page, who is the neighborhood association representative, to disseminate

pertinent information. We have found, however, that the most vocal complaints regarding the work are coming from neighbors who are not part of the neighborhood association. The newly placed 'Pardon Our Dust' sign, directing people to the city's website for more information, is intended to provide notice to concerned residents outside of the neighborhood.

Main Street Road Diet: The city commission has concerns regarding notifications in reference to the Main Street Road Diet pilot project. This project was designed for and implemented as a test project by the planning division. The planning division did not distribute notices.

The project design was in accordance with current state standards, except for swapping the permanent "bike lane" signs where the current "bike route" signs existed. Two signs were missed in the design for the drop lane for northbound Main Street at University, which were installed several days after the initial striping went down.

Based on staff and consultant observations, the vast majority of people obeyed the bike lane and other pavement markings almost immediately. While some complaints were received that residents were uninformed about the pilot test or were unhappy with the results, regular road users were cognizant of the road condition changes and adapted very quickly.

There continue to be a small number of drivers who are violating several laws by driving in the bike lanes. Staff can only assume the reasons for violating these laws, including: drivers are unaware of the laws associated with bike lane symbols and striping, drivers are simply confused or they are not paying attention or are distracted. Drivers may also be intentionally disregarding clear markings. It is difficult to change this behavior, except through education and enforcement.

Based on the test pilot, several recommendations are being developed to better direct and depict bike lane usage if implemented to permanent status. A report is forthcoming.

It should also be noted that due to numerous question regarding "sharrow" bike symbols arriving on many city streets in the summer of 2015, the city posted educational information on its website regarding safe cycling and obeying laws in regard to road and sidewalk usage, as well as designated signs, symbols and striping. The link to this informative posting is <http://romi.gov/bicycling-royal-oak>.

Given the numerous types of city projects and departments involved staff intends to continue both its existing formal and informal notification procedures with two adjustments. First, all distributed notices will be mailed at least fifteen (15) days prior to commence. Second, "Pardon or Dust" signs will continue in wider use.

If the city commission desires additional or special notifications it could so direct staff at the time a contract is awarded.

Respectfully submitted,
Matthew J. Callahan, P.E.
City Engineer

Timothy E. Thwing
Director of Community Development

Approved,



Donald E. Johnson
City Manager

Engineering

Project		Type	Project Manager	Direct Mailing			Typical timing of mailings	Other Communication	Why are these notices important
				Number of letters sent	Date of letters	Limits of mailing			
SW1502	2015 Sidewalk Improvement Program	Sidewalk	Exley	685	1/26/2016	All properties with delayed sidewalk work	30 days prior to start of construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway removals	Property Owners need to know how sidewalk work will affect them financially and perhaps their property
CAP1504	CDBG 4th Street Improvements (Knowles-Campbell)	Streetscape / Beautification	Donoghue	None		None - continuation of 2015 work (residents previously notified) which doesn't affect residents much	Approximately 1 month before construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway removals	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
SW1503	2015 CBD Sidewalk Program	Sidewalk	Bommarito	1262	1/19/2016 3/17/2016	All properties in the CBD	Beginning of year with update notice, then a month before construction begins	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway removals	Property Owners need to know how sidewalk work will affect them financially and perhaps their property
CAP1510	2015 Water Main Improvements	Water/Sewer	Donoghue	74	3/22/2016	Property owners and residents adjacent to utility work	Approximately 1 month before construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for water shutoffs and driveway removals	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1505	2015 & 2016 Concrete Street Repair	Roadwork	Donoghue	1384	3/16/2016	Property owners and residents adjacent to roadwork limits	Approximately 1 to 2 months before construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway removals	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1515	2015 & 2016 Asphalt Resurfacing	Roadwork	Donoghue	564	3/16/2016	Property owners and residents adjacent to roadwork limits	Approximately 1 month before construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway removals	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1625	2016 Joint Sealing	Roadwork	Donoghue		none - minor effect on residents; this would be good for a street sign				property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1535	2015 & 2016 Road Reconstruction	Roadwork	Donoghue	378	4/25/2016	Property owners and residents adjacent to roadwork limits	Approximately 2 months before construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway removals	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1604	2016 DDA 4th Street Improvements (Main-Knowles)	Streetscape	Donoghue	54	3/16/2016	Property owners and residents adjacent to roadwork limits	Approximately 1 month before construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway removals	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1606	2016 Sewer and Water Main Improvements	Water/Sewer	Donoghue	300	3/16/2016	Property owners and residents adjacent to utility work	Approximately 1 month before construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for water shutoffs and driveway removals	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1607	2016 Water Main Improvements	Water/Sewer	Donoghue	304	3/16/2016	Property owners and residents adjacent to utility work	Approximately 1 month before construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for water shutoffs and driveway removals	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1608	2016 Sidewalk Improvement Program	Sidewalk	Exley	3716	4/14/2016	All property owners in target area	30 days prior to start of construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway removals	Property Owners need to know how sidewalk work will affect them financially and perhaps their property
	2016 Sidewalk Improvement Program - New sidewalk locations	Sidewalk	Exley	102	5/7/2016	All property owners with proposed new sidewalk	1st mailing: 10 to 15 days prior to start commission reviewof construction Not including any follow up mailings		Property Owners need to know that the commission is actively making a decisuion that affects them financially and perhaps their property
CAP1609	2016 Eagle Plaza Park	Park Improvements	Davids	N/A	n/a - project not started		Planned for 1 month before construction	Meeting with business owners and donars Project sign would be helpful here	
CAP1610 / CAP1611	2016 MDOT S Main Street Improvements	Roadwork & Streetscape	Pernal	986	5/20/2016	Property owners and residents adjacent to roadwork limits and properties affected on sidestreets	Approximately 1 month before construction	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway removals	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction or by traffic impacts
	S. Main Street Streetscapes - Special Assessment	Roadwork & Streetscape	Pernal	18	multiple mailings	Properties to be special assessed for streetscape work	1st mailing: 10 to 15 days prior to start commission review Not including any follow up mailings		
CAP1612	2016 CDBG Worden Park Improvements	Park Improvements	Donoghue		None - no adjacent properties		Planned for 1 month before construction	Tod Gazetti to inform tennis / soccer coordinators	
CAP1614	2016 CDBG Dondero Park Improvements	Park Improvements	Donoghue	39	6/14/2016	Properties with a direct view of the park	Planned for 1 month before construction	None	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1640	2016 Sewer Lining	Water/Sewer	Seneres	150	TBD	All properties with sewer leads attached to sewer to be lined	Within 10 days after project award	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for sewer lead restriction	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1641	2016 Spot Sewer Repair	Water/Sewer	Seneres	30	TBD	Property owners and residents on block with scheduled sewer repairs	Within 10 days after project award	Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway blockages	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
TBD	2016 Sewer TV	Water/Sewer	Seneres	TBD	TBD	Properties with rear-yard sewers only	Within 10 days after project award	None	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction
CAP1630	2016 Special Assessment Paving	Roadwork	Donoghue	120	4/13/2016	Property owners on streets with proposed special assessment paving - delay notice	As soon as project delay decision was finalized	None	property owners who are directly impacted by the construction

Total: 10,166

Other Engineering Notifications

	Special assesment public hearing notifications	Roadwork		numerous		All properties in special assessment district	14 days prior to public hearings	published in newspaper	Required by code/law
	Private Property Paving renewals	Traffic		625		All eligible properties adjacent to permit parking zones	30 to 45 days prior to old permit expiration		Not required by code however courtesy
	Traffic committee review notifications	Traffic		150		All individuals making review requests, noted officials, departments and organizations	10 days prior to traffic committee meeting or city commission meeting		Not required by code however courtesy
	Traffic committee public hearings			numerouis		All properties affected by request (typically Permit Parking)	7 to 10 days prior to traffic committee meeting or city commission meeting		Required by code/law

Department of Public Service/Parks

Project		Type	Project Manager	Direct Mailing			Typical timing of mailings	Other Communication	Why are these notices important
				Number of letters sent	Date of letters	Limits of mailing			
	Play structure installation	Park		0	NA				As most projects within city park property , and not directly impacying an individual property owner or rresident, no notices are given
	Bathroom structure installation	Park		0	NA				As most projects within city park property , and not directly impacying an individual property owner or rresident, no notices are given
	Sign installation or maintenance	Park		0	NA				As most projects within city park property , and not directly impacying an individual property owner or rresident, no notices are given
	Lawn mowing or other park maintenance	Park		0	NA				As most projects within city park property , and not directly impacying an individual property owner or rresident, no notices are given
	Lawn mowing or other ROW maintenance	ROW		0	NA				As most projects within city row , and have the potential to directly impact an individual property owner or resident, however are for a short amount of time, no notices are given
	Tree Trimming or tree removal	ROW		0	NA				As most projects within city row , and have the potential to directly impact an individual property owner or resident, however are for a short amount of time, no notices are given
	Pavement repair	ROW		0	NA			Door hanger notices 24 hours in advance for driveway removals	Within city row , and has the potential to directly impact an individual property owner or resident, however is for a short amount of time, no notices are given
	Sewer Collapse	ROW		0	NA			Door hanger notices in advance for water shutoffs and driveway removals as best as possible	Emergency work does not allow for adequate notice
	Water Main Break	ROW		0	NA			Door hanger notices in advance for water shutoffs and driveway removals as best as possible	Emergency work does not allow for adequate notice